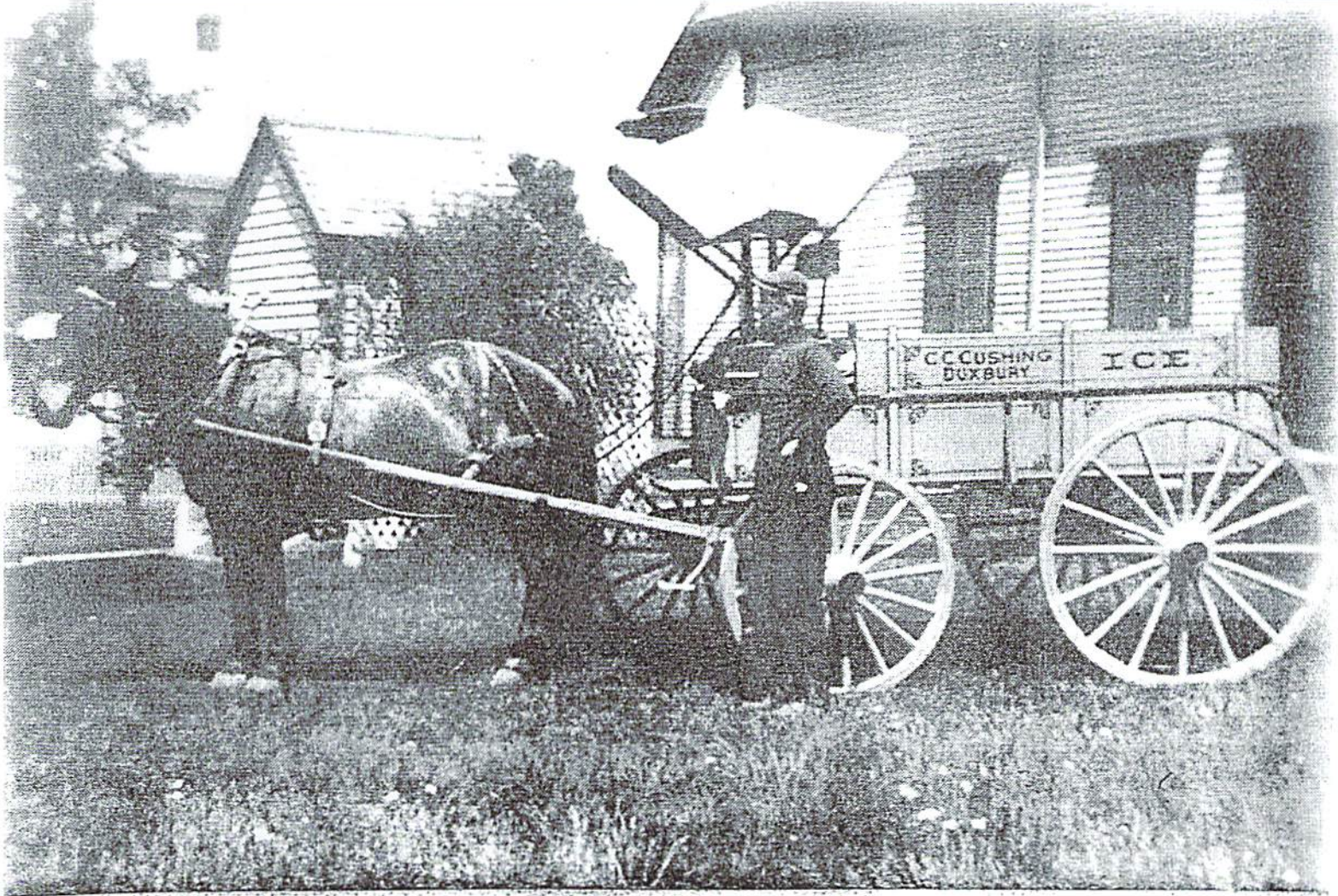


Business and industry

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Old cold — The Cushing family harvested ice from Mill Pond in Duxbury since before the turn of the century.



Hedge cutters — Harvesting at Hedge Pond in Plymouth.

"While he was in the house, sliding the ice block onto the ice box, we kids would be out on Spring Lane. We'd boost one of our gang up into Sherman's wagon to scoop out slivers of ice by hand into our paws. When we saw Mr. Sherman come out of the house, we'd run like hares up the granite steps on the south side of Burial Hill."

ICE AGE *Passes*

By Maggie Mills
MPG Newspapers

Fifty-five years ago next month, we purchased a three-room house on Center Street in North Carver. At the time, Francis and I had a 9-month-old daughter, Frannie, named for her father.

Little did I know then the property backed up to the 23-acre, spring-fed Cooper's Pond which became the center of our lives for more than a half-century.

I've always been curious as to the origin of names. That is why through the years, I took the time to try to find out why our pond was named Cooper.

It whetted my interest to learn that Cooper's Pond got its name from "coopers," men who supplied ice from fresh water ponds that froze deep in the winter.

The coopers either built their own wooden ice houses on the shore nearest to the deepest depth of the pond, or they were hired out by commercial companies interested in harvesting ice to take care of city folks' needs in the summer.

Coopers were well trained for the job of building or repairing wooden casks or huge tubs to store blocks of "natural" ice.

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Brrrrr! — Out on Hedge Pond



Saw tooth — A large machine used to cut ice from the pond.



Photos courtesy of Doris Pedrini

Ice house gang — The Pederzani family owned an ice house near Hedge School, Plymouth. Ice was cut from the pond and delivered to customers in ice chests.

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No longer in existence today are the large ice houses built by Rossi Shurtleff who owned considerable property in North Carver, including Muddy and Cooper's ponds.

According to the late Ellsworth Braddock, a Carver native who wrote the *Memories of North Carver Village* in 1977, Shurtleff had a large ice house located at the bottom of our dirt lane, no wider than a cart path at the time.

Today, to accommodate homeowners who have built on this side of the pond, the original path, now known as Mills Lane, is much wider.

Digging into the history, I learned that beginning around 1830, natural ice was a big business. It was needed for homes, fishing boats, inns and restaurants. This is when the icebox became a fixture in many homes.

Memories

I still remember the iceman coming up the backyard steps of the stoop to my parents' second floor apartment at 48 Court St. in Plymouth.

In later years when we lived on High Street, Orrin Sherman and his son, Carlton, would come to the neighborhood in their old truck, painted white, which replaced the horse and wagon they earlier used to deliver ice in the summer.

Carlton's widow, Ida, told me her father-in-law, Orrin, cut ice on four different ponds, one in Carver and three in Plymouth, among them Russell Mills Pond in Chiltonville.

What I liked best was when our iceman chipped blocks of ice in the truck to fit into our ice box.

While he was in the house, sliding the ice block into the ice box, we kids would be out on Spring Lane. We'd boost one of

our gang up into Sherman's wagon to scoop out slivers of ice by hand into our paws. When we saw Mr. Sherman come out of the house, we'd run like hares up the granite steps on the south side of Burial Hill to hide behind the big monument in memory of Thomas Cushing.

I think Papa bought our old buck or Harry Cohen, who used to sell secondhand appliances from his neat little shop on Market Street.

I well remember the first refrigerator Papa got for Mama later, when we were living at 39 High St. I know the refrigerator was secondhand because it was scratched and had small dents. Mama insisted it go in the back entry of the High Street house which opened up on Spring Lane.

Papa had also just replaced our black oil stove with a brand new cream and green trimmed enamel range with oil burners.

Ice chest from Sears, Roeb.

Believe it or not, Mama was never happy with the new stove, for Papa had it delivered as a surprise without consulting her about the color.

Silver Lake

The late Plympton historian Eugene A. Wright wrote in his *Tales of Old Plympton* the story of a Bostonian, Herbert Fairfield, president of the Dorchester Ice Co., who built five ice houses on the shore of Silver Lake to store frozen ice obtained in mid-winter. Come the warm months, tons of ice would be shipped in the cool of the evening by freight trains running from Plymouth into Boston.

In midwinter, when the ice on the pond was sufficiently thick enough, men would come and plot out the pond with horse drawn plows. At the same time, channels were cut up to the shore. The ice was then sawed into blocks of ice or cakes and floated up to a chain belt, turned by an engine. It lifted the cakes up to the proper level. Sometimes, if the ice was too thick, it went through a planer to reduce it. The blocks or cakes were covered with layers of sawdust to be stacked in the large ice houses built on the shore of the pond.

Hedge Pond

Hedge Pond, near the Hedge Elementary School playground on Standish Avenue in North Plymouth, was once the site of a very successful ice-making business owned and operated by the late Louis Pederzani and his wife, Esther, explained their youngest daughter, Doris Pedrini, last week.

Pedrini's older sister, Flora Zaniboni, recalls assisting her father with the business. "I started at an early, early age and worked with Pa for more than a quarter of a century," said the nonagenarian.

Today the sisters live in the family home in which they were reared, located across from Hedge Pond. It was part of the properties the Pederzanis started buying in 1916 or 1917. Both parents emigrated from Italy prior to World War I, added Doris.

Their house is directly across from the school where Mrs. Pedrini currently volunteers in the mornings. She began volunteering after many years as a full-time employee at the school.

Turning to look out at the pond where the Pederzanis built their three ice houses, Doris said her father and mother continued to own the business until he died. Later, the family sold the land on the westerly side of the pond to the town. It is now the Hedge School playground.

She added she always admired her mother who worked in the Plymouth Cordage Company in addition to raising her children and helping out in her husband's business.

Three generations

Two weeks ago, Roger Clifton Cushing, 80, reluctantly recalled the freezing cold weather in past winters when his father, Claude Cushing, to put it politely, ordered him to leave the warm kitchen to saw blocks of ice to be stored in ice houses. There were three ice houses in all and it took a lot of ice and sawdust to keep the family business going.

Mill Pond, off Route 3A in West Duxbury, was the site where the Cushing family operated their ice harvesting business. It was founded before the turn of the century by John Walter Cushing who died in 1915, at the age of 76, leaving the business to his son, Claude C. Cushing. Roger, now 80, took over following the death of Claude in 1940.

In mid-winter, when the pond ice became six to seven inches

or even thicker, the Cushing family and their help would begin harvesting the ice. The workers would move about an area marked out by horse drawn plows. Then, armed with their cutting and sawing tools, they would saw the ice into blocks to be floated down manmade channels up to a moving chain belt which sent the ice blocks up to the ice house, insulated by saw dust.

Shortly after Roger Cushing inherited his father's business, President Franklin W. Roosevelt declared war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. Naturally, Roger responded to the call of Uncle Sam by joining the U.S. Army.

Returning home, he went back to the ice business, working hard to support his family, until 1963 when he made the decision that he had had enough of it.

Summer to winter

Cooper's Pond was lovely in the summer months. It was filled with happy children swimming, diving from homemade rafts and learning to row. Our first wooden boat I bought second hand from the change I made selling homemade goodies from a table set up under a tall elm tree on our front lawn, facing Route 44. My brownies and Toll House cookies were my best drawing card, commented the tourists and truck drivers when they stopped on their way to and from Plymouth.

As a rule, activities on the pond began May 1 and extended through Indian summer to October for our three daughters, Frannie, Anne-Devlin and Bobbie.

There was always a crowd of kids, including the girls' numerous cousins, neighborhood youngsters and classmates who would arrive from early in the morning to dusk.

Sometimes the kids would

bring their own lunch. If they didn't, I'd supply peanut butter or homemade grape jelly sandwiches and drinks.

White bread was cheap in those days, 15 cents a loaf. A pound of fresh peanut butter was 25 cents, bought loose from the five-pound pail at the A&P grocery store in downtown Plymouth, and Kool Aid was five packages for 10 cents.

One package of Kool Aid, mixed with a gallons of ice cold water from our backyard well filled the hollow stomachs of the kids, who claimed they were "starving."

In those days, I was a stay-at-home mother for the man of the house believed his wife should be like his mother, Annie B. Mills. She never worked a day in her life outside the home for she was too busy bringing up her nine children.

I never worried about my youngsters on Cooper's Pond until the winter months arrived. Throughout the late falls, I'd watch the Canada geese fly south in their V-like formation, knowing they'd not return until the spring.

That's when my fears set in, something I guess I inherited from Mama who was afraid of ice skating.

When the weatherman forecasts the Big Chill and the temperature sinks to the frigid lows, I know the ice on the Cooper's Pond is thickening.

That's when Mama's warning to her children not to venture on the ice echoes in my ear. Her deathly fear of Murdock Pond, abutting Stevens Greenhouses off Stoddard Street in Plymouth, comes back to me.

I recall Mama repeating the neighborhood stories that Murdock Pond had no bottom. If the ice broke, a child would go though, never ever to be seen again by the family.

I really don't know whether that ever happened on Murdock Pond. At least it didn't happen to me when I joined my friends on the ice. I had no skates, only the soles of my shoes, worn smoothly enough to permit me to round the edges of the pond.